



TOURO BOULIGNY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION ...From Napoleon to Louisiana, Magazine to St. Charles

March 18, 2019

Orleans Parish School Board
Property Committee
Nolan Marshall, Jr. (Board_Member7@opsb.us)
Woody Koppel (Board_Member6@opsb.us)
Leslie Ellison (Board_Member4@opsb.us)
2401 Westbend Parkway
New Orleans, LA 70114
VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dear Property Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Touro Bouligny Neighborhood Association Board (TBNA) in reference to Action Item 4.1 on the Property Committee Meeting agenda for March 19, 2019. I apologize for the tardiness of this letter, but the neighborhood was informed today that this item would be on the agenda.

Action Item 4.1 authorizes the OPSB administration to confect an agreement with HANO in order to procure the land next to Booker T. Washington. As stated by Eric Seling and Ben Kleban, HANO desires for McDonogh No. 7 to be a part of the property package. The McDonogh No. 7 property is located within TBNA and therefore the potential sale or transfer of that property would greatly affect our neighborhood.

Upon becoming aware last year that there was a potential for the transfer and redevelopment of the property, the TBNA requested a meeting with the OPSB, which was held on November 12, 2018. At this meeting, OPSB Representatives explained that discussions with HANO about the site had occurred and described the procedure in general for the transfer of surplus school property. No specifics about the redevelopment of the site or timing of the redevelopment were provided.

To follow up on the discussion from that meeting and request more detailed information about the potential transfer and redevelopment, the TBNA Board sent a letter to the OPSB on January 19, 2019.

The OPSB replied with a letter on February 27, 2019. The recent February 27, 2019 letter from the OPSB stated that "initial discussions" with HANO have included the McDonogh No. 7 site, but did not indicate that any action would be taken in the near



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future regarding the property. The letter did not provide any information about the nature or timing of any redevelopment of the site, but directed any questions regarding this topic to HANO. Arrangements were made for a follow up meeting with the neighborhood and OPSB on March 18th. HANO was invited, but did not attend. At the meeting on March 18th, the neighborhood learned that the discussions with HANO, to the contrary, were not in the initial phase as represented in the February 27 letter, but would be subject to a vote by the OPSB property committee the next day, with a vote by the full board on Thursday, March 21st.

Communication with the TBNA by the OPSB has not been transparent, and communication with the TBNA from HANO has been nonexistent. The community has not received adequate information regarding the nature and timing of the potential redevelopment of the property. The neighborhood only learned that the OPSB would take a vote on the matter on the evening of Monday, March 18th, less than 24 hours before the scheduled vote. The TBNA strongly objects to this decision making process by the OPSB and HANO which has provided no meaningful information to the community and excluded the community from this decision making process.

The TBNA Board opposes any sale or transfer of the McDonogh No. 7 property at this time to HANO due to the lack of transparency regarding the transfer of the property and the uncertainty surrounding the transfer and future use. TBNA has not received any information from HANO or the OPSB describing the development plans for the site or a proposed timeline for such redevelopment. Without such information, the stakeholders in the neighborhood cannot adequately evaluate and provide an informed response regarding the proposed transfer. A residential development at the site has the potential to be out of scale with the surrounding low-density neighborhood. Further, without a definite redevelopment plan, the Board is concerned that HANO will allow the property to lie vacant for an extended period of time, creating a potential health and safety hazard for our neighborhood. HANO's poor track record as property owner only increases our concerns. Without any input from stakeholders in the neighborhood, a valuable community asset - a school that has been serving the community for decades - has the potential to be replaced with a residential development out of scale to the neighborhood or with an abandoned site. HANO was invited to attend our neighborhood meeting this evening and chose not to attend - this only enhances our fear that they will be unwilling to work with the neighborhood.



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We would appreciate you taking our concerns into account when voting on Action Item 4.1

Sincerely,

Rella Zapletal

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